

The return of the *Follies*: from Traditional to Digital

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Citation: Aleixo, S. (2021). The return of the *Follies* from Traditional to Digital. *UOU scientific journal* #02, 12-25.
ISSN: 2697-1518. <https://doi.org/10.14198/UOU.2021.2.02>

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AUTUMN 2021: A FOLLY CONTEXT

Who would have thought that by now, the end of 2021, the world would be so anxious to know when will the virus be overcome, when will it be safe to travel again, when will safety rules be relaxed? Who would imagine that the most wanted words to be heard would be “tested COVID-19 negative”, “I’m vaccinated”, or “there will be no more waves of COVID-19”? Who would imagine that far away friends and family would be still such long a time away, without a hug, sharing smiles and photos, still boosting the use of WhatsApp and Instagram Apps? Who would think that it would be possible to teach and learn Architecture’s practical subjects, such as Design Studios, not in a classroom but in everyone’s own home, increasing the use of virtual conferences with Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and other synchronous communication software’s, while embracing new forms of communicating perceptions that the senses have been forbidden to experience because of Covid? Who would imagine that, almost in a flash, technology would have had such an impact in our daily life?

In this new world all this was possible due to the tiring efforts of those working in ICT, in the health systems, but also in the food and common goods supply chains, and in pharmacology research units. Many kept working without resting for the sake of those that, reluctantly but aware of the violence of the virus’s impact, remained at home, reducing enormously, not only the carbon footprint but also, most importantly, the physical contact people had at home with their families, at work with their colleagues, at leisure places with their friends.

Never before have people been aware of the need for qualitative environments, either interior or exterior. The inhabited spaces became the *talk of the town*. Discussions took place about the entrance space reserved to remove shoes and outdoor clothes, on the improvised school at the corner of the living room, on the moveable office - at some of the day was set up in the kitchen whereas others used the bedside table plug to charge the laptop, to have a quiet space for a video

conference,... all these topics became shared conversations about how to adapt to change?

During the lock-down everywhere, the effort was to make everything at home/ from home and avoid going out on the street where this virus SARS-CoV-2 was circulating. The leitmotif was, and still is at this stage, “protect yourself and others”.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome CoronaVirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) is mainly spread via respiratory droplets including aerosols projected by an infected person. However, the possibility to be infected by contact with surfaces contaminated with droplets produced a new awareness regarding the number of contacts per person per-day. The same nose, mouth or eyes that provide architectural perception of spaces, along with the hands that can be vehicles for the virus to spread, are the bodily senses that are most important for the acknowledgement of the qualities of a space.

COVID-19'S IMPACT ON ARCHITECTS

We are not yet at a post-pandemic stage, although vaccination has been reported since January 2021 in several countries. A complex logistic called for the deployment of vaccines globally in order to save lives and end the pandemic. Some people became severely ill, and too many have unfortunately died¹. Many will experience post-COVID symptoms and will suffer with complications. This alerts architects who may not have been attentive in the past for the need to pay attention to limiting capacity in the use of the built spaces, or considered an aging population and the special needs of older people. Unfortunately, the need to pay attention to accessibility, due to permanent or temporary physical incapacities in the earlier age groups, might have come to stay.

All this COVID-19 becomes a folly when it is known that infected people can transmit the virus, both when they have symptoms and when they don't have symptoms. This fact has changed the way people perceived their civic and ethical responsibilities toward others. At

this point, architects also are requested to act: how could architecture provide safe, comfortable, secure and efficient spaces? What information may architects gather from public health experts to provide design guidelines where social distancing is assured while well-being is enhanced? There may be a post-COVID transition period, and if so, one wonders if architectural design will preserve lessons learned during this crisis.

One substantial difference is already observable in the public realm: people in sidewalks avoid crossing close to others, streets now have innumerable outdoor eating areas with tables and chairs on sidewalks reducing the space for pedestrians, public transportation has less users, and the number of cars circulating with only its driver has increased. However, it is the inside spaces, of homes, offices and retail stores/shops, that the impact seems to have been greatest. In our saying, the most used “design rule” is named *distance*. And this measure is flexible, now being reduced as the vaccines better protect the population, but with its increase as soon, and if, the numbers of infected and/or death decrease.

Architects need to stand up and claim for themselves the right to investigate and contribute to the well-being of citizens by recalling their responsibility to provide solutions for the architectural problems raised by this virus. One of the problems is the psychological impact on our mental health, as it induces fear, worry and concern in the population. All the stress and anxiety that the disease causes, or that the prophylactic quarantine triggers, needs to be balanced with opportunities for happiness, pleasure, enjoyment and fun. Although our ears may still hear the sounds, the use of face masks means that our noses are limited in the perception of smelling aromas and odours, our mouths are limited in tasting, our tactile perception is reduced so that our skin does not touch surfaces or others, and therefore we do not feel the temperature or textures of spaces. Ultimately, our eyes are tired of being stimulated by the light of laptop screens and are almost unable to distinguish between digital and real.

We need to reclaim back the power of our sensory and perceptual systems, the right to feel again physical stimuli, known and new; we need our perceptions to be awakened; we need to end our fears and worries and feel again the happiness of being alive and feeling well: we need the build environment to express enjoyment in its architecture,

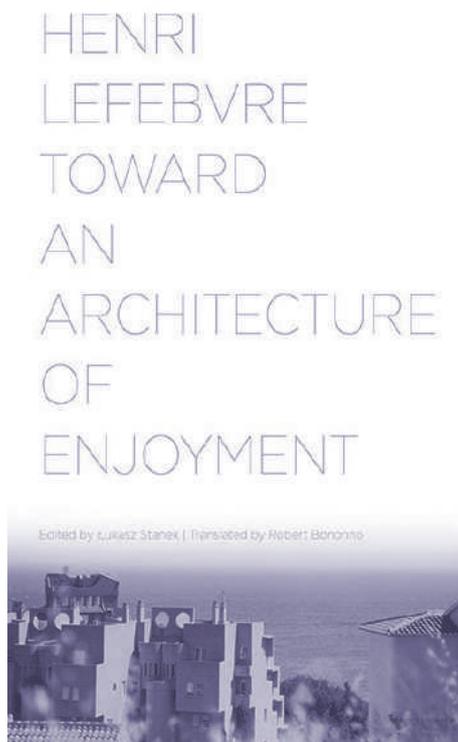


Fig. 1 – Cover of “Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment”, by Henri Lefebvre (written in 1973)

as almost fifty years ago Henri Lefebvre called for. In “Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment” (Lefebvre 2014), Lefebvre calls for a bodily centered architecture, for architecture to be a spatial practice of the everyday, in its rhythms and senses (Fig.1). Consequently, he established a relationship between bodily experience, participation, and individual spatial interventions, linking happiness with space use, exploring the affective dimensions of space, and allowing the senses to drive spatial experiences. The spaces of enjoyment are, he claims, important sites for personal and collective moments, encounters, friendships, rest, quiet, joy, as well as understanding, enigmas, the unknown, and the known. Thus, arguably, Lefebvre does not consider architecture a specialized process, but as the production of social space. Architecture is then redefined as a “mode of imagination”, where the experience and appropriation of spaces derive from bodily activities and use to enable the ephemeral sense of joy and enjoyment to emerge. Finally, Lefebvre argues that areas dedicated to enjoyment of non-productive leisure time are important sites for a society passing beyond industrial modernization.

We argue that they are of utmost importance for a post-pandemic

society, as there is a need to approach architecture from a human perspective, re-engage with others, in the safety of outdoor spaces, and using the knowledge and experience of architects. It is known that change drives innovation, therefore, the pandemic is providing an opportunity to creatively imagine the 21st century *follies* where the joy to meet and socialize in urban spaces can be regained.

UoU & FOLLIES

Even knowing that the *folly* could provide an opportunity for design research and experimentation, nevertheless how to encourage the international network of researchers, educators and practitioners at UNIVERSITY of Universities to think about 21st century *follies* to engage with this? Firstly, our previous experience in the University of Évora to engage UoU students was used. The internationalization of architecture programs where the idea of foolishness, of openness to explore creativity in architecture education, is explored to simultaneously contribute to mental well-being while studying folly architecture. (This a reminder that students need universities support more than ever at this challenging time). Secondly, *follies* were explored more deeply: as a concept, as an

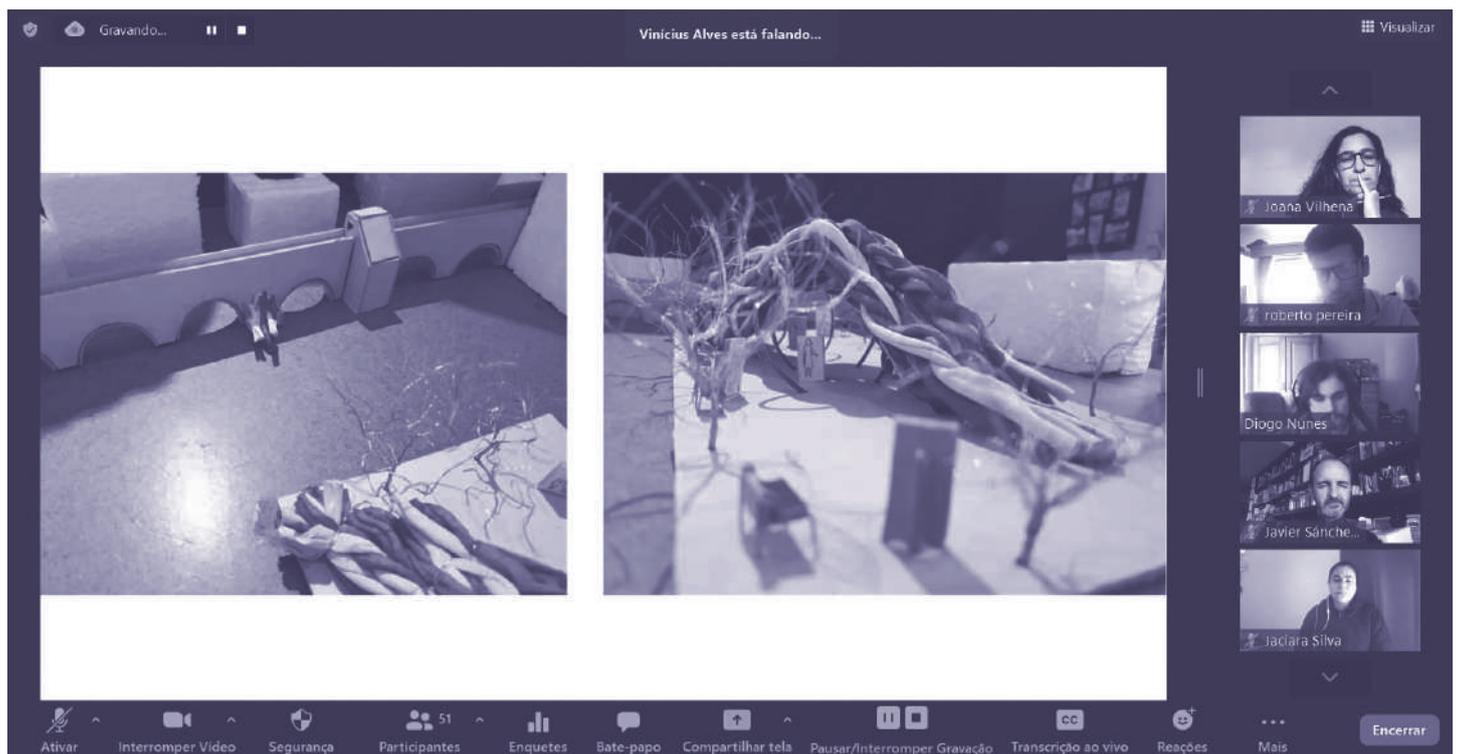


Fig. 2 - Workshop 3b on “Ephemeral architecture: urban follies”. Tutoring by Sofia Aleixo and Joana Vilhena, University of Évora: explaining the brief.

architectural typology, and to understand what needs these structures have been fulfilling, even though considered to be non-functional architectural elements (Fig.2).

The second semester of the UoU academic year 2020/2021 followed the idea of the previous semester, a course based on exchanging international workshops, where each one of the 27 available topics was directed by different teachers from the Schools of Architecture that have joined the programme. Workshop 3b on “Ephemeral architecture: urban follies”, tutored by Sofia Aleixo and Joana Vilhena set out the challenge. Darwin’s quote “It is not the strongest of the species that survives but the most adaptable to change” established the mood: if one cannot travel to Évora, to meet in person this World Heritage City (WHC), we will change the way we travel, by digitally bringing international students to Évora city museums, and exchange knowledge about local architectural heritage values in synchronous meetings.

And that we did! Participants were asked to design an Urban Folly (from French *follie*, “foolishness”, a generally non-functional building that was in vogue during the 18th and early 19th centuries,

typically to enhance a natural landscape), an ephemeral structure to place in an urban space, where the unimaginable would happen: the city heritage would be displayed, not inside a traditional and immovable museum, but in the square or the street, perhaps in the space where the museum pieces have been found. And, by 5G technology, these *follies* would be in contact with the rest of the world and provide a virtual tour to the WHC of Évora.

Aimed at raising awareness about the local heritage of a WHC, and exploring how it could be displayed to the public, here in the outdoors and elsewhere on

a screen, this workshop captured the interest of 62 participants, among whom 38 were local students (Évora University). Paired with the international colleagues, seven groups were established. The selection of an historic urban space in Évora historic center required the search and proposal of the local students, the youngest, to the older, their foreign colleagues that would approve, or not. The design of an architectural structure enabling people (locals and visitors) to enjoy the historic attributes of that place, encouraged research, discussion, design and the presentation of the idea in a mock-up (e.g. Fig 3).

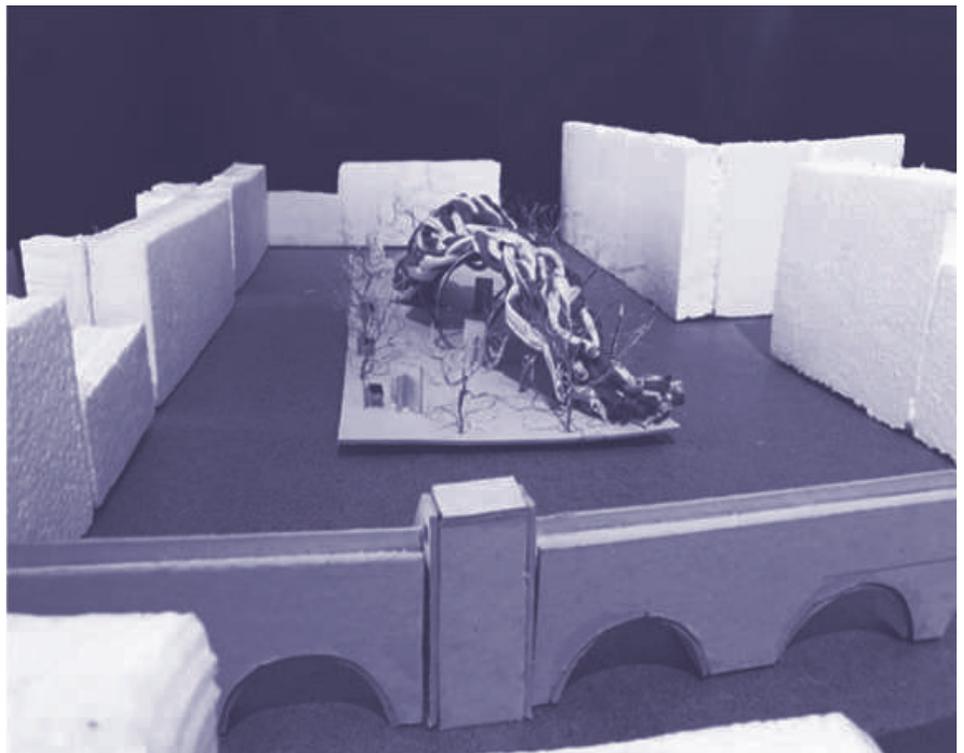


Fig. 3 - Workshop UOU 3b / Group 2 (Vanessa García, Michaela Demjanovicová, Ozan Yasar, Danilo Custódio, Vasco Lima, Guilherme Sousa, Vinicius Silva and Diogo Nunes): a (contaminating) *Folly* at the Chão das Covas Square with the Aqueduct *Água da Prata*, Évora.

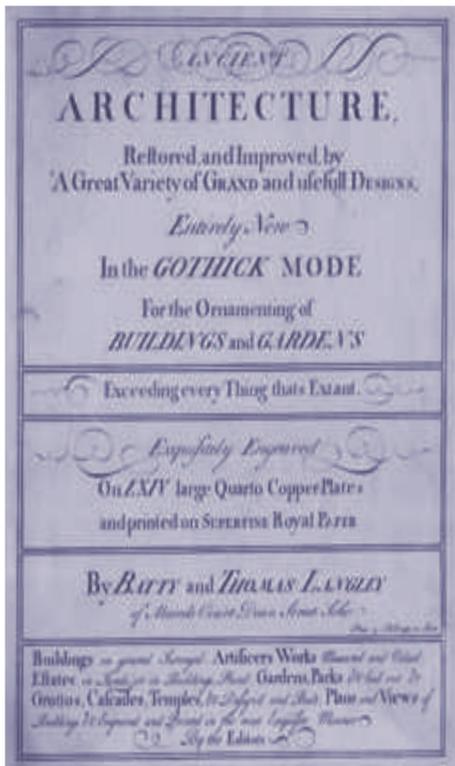


Fig. 4 - "Exceeding every Thing that's Extant".
Front cover of LANGLEY, Batty and T. LANGLEY,
1742.

The success of this workshop, and the interest it sparked, were indicators that, added to the work that has been conducted in Évora University since 2017 along with this topic, encouraged the call for UoU Scientific Journal #2.

UoU SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL & FOLLIES: THE CALL

The French word *folie* stands for delight and pleasure, and therefore fun and happiness. First built in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, *follies* were buildings constructed purely for aesthetic pleasure, with a notion of nonsense, i.e., with a lack of good sense or foresight, resulting in often extravagant pieces of architecture with no particular function. These architectural features could be found in gardens and in the wider landscape; towers, temples, sham castles, pyramids, grottoes, obelisks or mock ruins of classical buildings, seemingly randomly abandoned, were symbolic statements of constructions not easily understood, sometimes with a practical value as landmarks, conversations places, commemorative of a person or event, as lending interest to a view, or as simple amusement places, often offering a sensorial experience.

England was the place where *follies* gained the greatest diversity and expression.

The 17th century saw the construction of many *follies*. However, this was surpassed in the 18th century production; the English garden designer Batty Langley (1696-1751) is considered to have introduced Gothic designs in garden structures in the 1740s, and also suggesting building replicas or versions of classical ruins.

The book *Ancient Architecture Restored* published in 1742 and reissued in 1747 as *Gothic Architecture, improved by Rules and Proportions*, displayed a number of engraved designs (by his brother Thomas) for "Gothick" structures such as summerhouses and garden seats. In this book (Fig.4), Langley proposed the design of the following types of *follies*: "an umbrella, a square umbrella, an umbrella to terminate a view, an octangular to terminate a view, an umbrella for the centre of intersection of walks on woods, gothick temple and gothick pavilion", the latter with two levels. These different expressions of *folly* fully illustrate what is promised on the front cover: "Exceeding every Thing that's Extant".

In the UK, *follies* and landscape ornaments have been included in several publications (Fig.5) and architectural guides such as those by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner (1902-1983) "The Buildings of England", first published from 1951 to 1974, followed by "The Buildings of Ireland, Scotland and Wales". Pevsner's interest in *follies* extended to the builders. In his essay on the architecture of Edwin Lutyens, a "builder of *follies* who was at the same time the architect of the common man", he comments:

"(...) the fascination wrought on the British more than any other race by the folly in architecture. Nor need the British be ashamed of that fascination; for to appreciate folly and a folly a degree of detachment is needed which is only accessible to old and humane civilizations. Sir Edwin Lutyens was without any doubt the greatest folly builder England has ever seen".

Pevsner concludes:

"But in England the eccentric has as good a chance of social success!"

Among the remarkably eccentric *follies* built in the UK, it cannot be unnoticed the massive pineapple building - in fact a hothouse - built at Dunmore Park (1761), a part of Scotland's Heritage. The building of *follies* diminished by the end of the 18th century, although it never completely ceased.

In the late 19th century the architect Louis Sullivan's maxim "form follows function" banished ornament from industrialised modern architecture, changing how architecture was to be thought about. Since then, as by definition *follies* did not have a specific use or

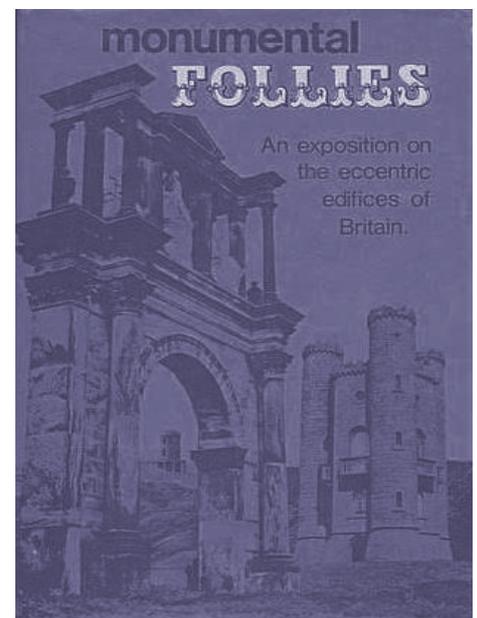
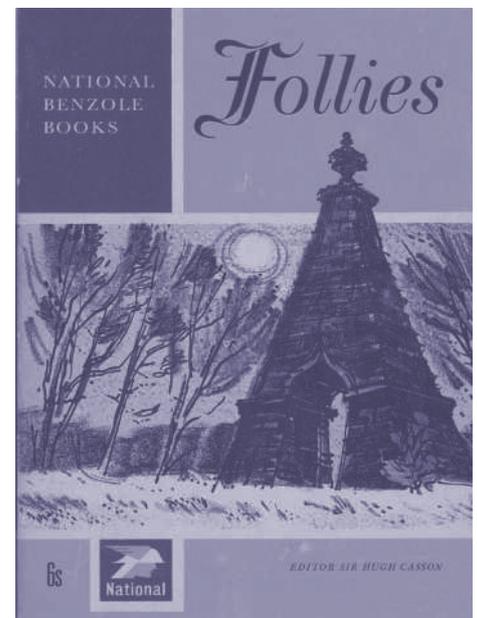
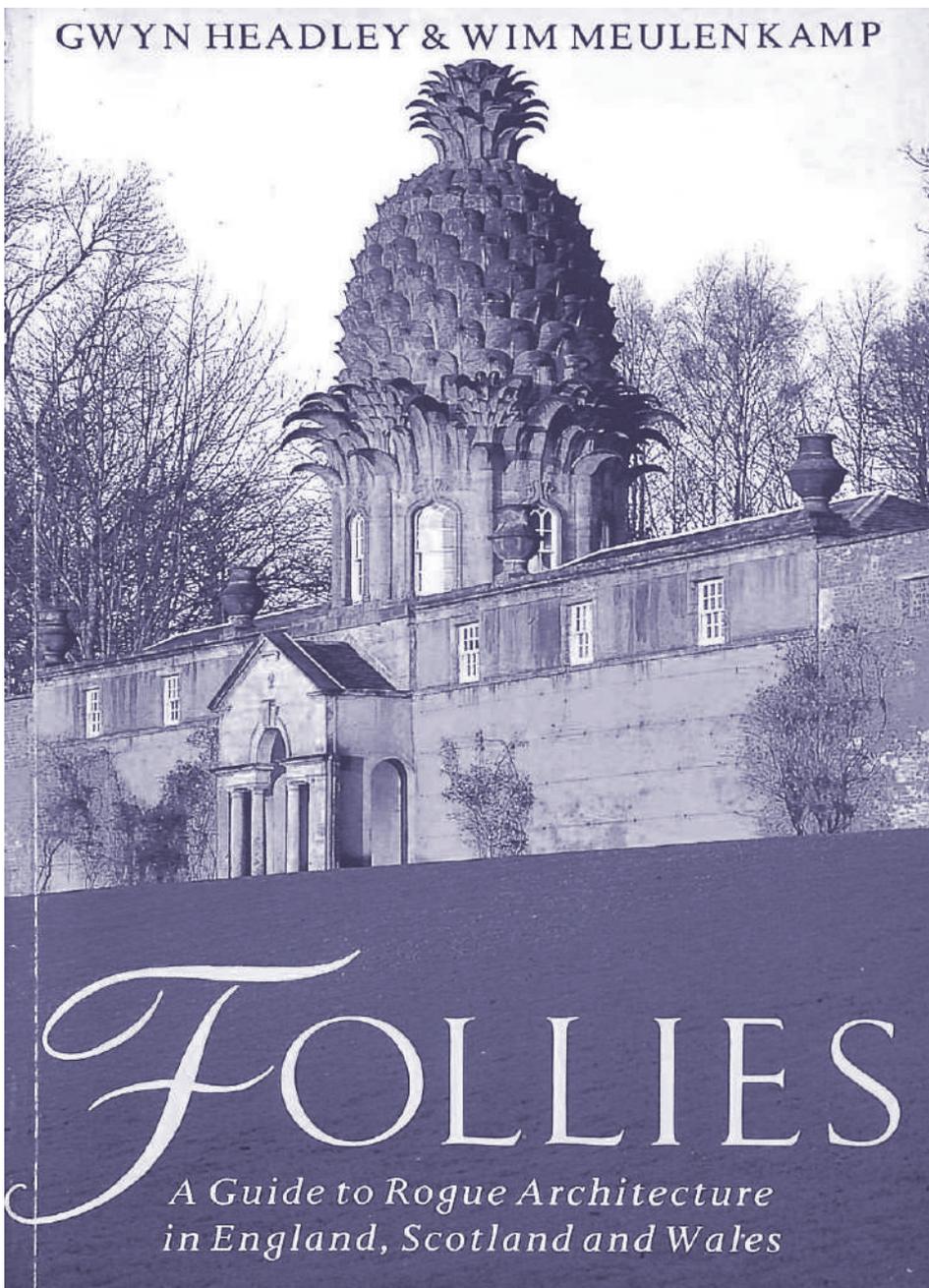
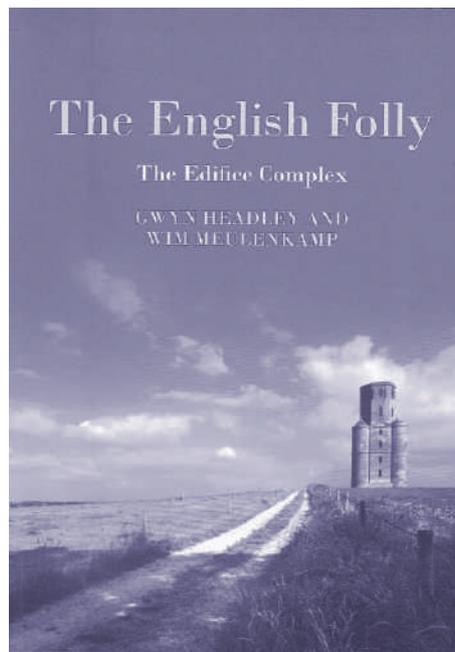
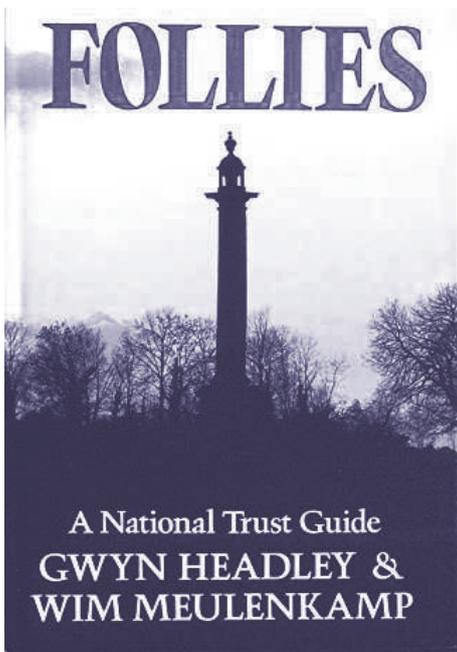


Fig. 5 – UK Follies: publications.



function, they theoretically could not establish a form, and these constructions fell out of use.

The post-modernist renaissance of folly architecture

In the 1980's Bernard Tschumi returned the architectural concept of folly - "small constructions hidden by dense foliage" - but defined it with a different meaning; as "madness". In the context of the 1980s, French madness seems to be a more useful definition than the English "folly" of the 18th century. Tschumi argues, that it "appears to illustrate a characteristic situation at the end of the twentieth century – that of disjunctions and dissociations between use, form and social values", somewhat different from 18th century humanism, and also the approach of 20th century modernism.

With this rationale, the link to follies history is cut, built precedents ignored and a new beginning is facilitated for the rebirth of the folly as an object "able to receive new meanings". And this freedom enables the use of empty form, of meaningless empty constructions, of designing "cases vides".

François Mitterand's "Grand Projects" programme (officially known as "Grandes Opérations d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme"), in which the Parc de La Villette was included, was announced in 1982.

A competition for a park project was held the following year, and Tschumi was the author of the winning proposal. In the overall Park proposal, Tschumi created "a set of ephemeral constructions whose role was that of a critical laboratory for architecture", exploring ideas of *uselessness* and *excess* in a public place of experimentation.

The unusual red structures explored the concept of madness and lunacy in a new proposal for the design of urban contexts, ignoring built precedents, and considering "disjunction" to be the best concept to describe the relation between use, form and values at this time. By establishing a grid, with lines defining points, and surfaces defined by lines, 35 follies

become anchoring points of reference in the Park, challenging the boundaries with the urban environment, and calling for the use of these devices (Fig. 6).

Interestingly, in the same year, 1983, but across the Atlantic, in New York, at the Exhibition *Follies – Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape* (Fig. 7), Anthony Vidler argued for an architecture that fulfils the needs of pleasure and leisure, and therefore “the folly became once again essential, but this time not as nonsense, but as sense itself”.

The exhibit by B. J. Archer, invited architects to “allow the imagination to elaborate on the simplest forms”, and create follies presented in models, photographs and drawings. “Follistes” were encouraged to enjoy “the pleasure of creating an object which embodies no function, save for demarcation, or as useful for only a small segment of daily life”. In the catalogue, Vidler explored what might arguably be the only architectural “History of the Folly” ever published in that decade. Additionally, in the same publication, Peter Eisenman claimed that “the world has changed (...) it has become (...) quite mad”, in opposition to a rational and ordered world based on a classical or modernist system. He called for a new logic, “a «logic» of another kind”, calling for a condition of ephemerality based on “reason and madness, between art and folly”.

Indeed, if the world had changed then, how it has changed now, in the second decade of the 21st century!!! However, it would not be acceptable to move forward to the present day without mentioning some of the relevant experiences with Follies, that took place in the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

The Osaka Follies, purposely designed and built for the 1990 International Garden and Greenery Expositionⁱⁱ “marked the coming of age of the landscape architecture profession in Japan” (HENTY, 1991, p. 133). Follies were “structures were positioned at various ‘crossroads plazas’ throughout the Expo in order to bring interest and activity to these public spaces” (VARGHESE, 2019, p-109).

According to an essay then written by Koji Taki (1991), Follies moved from a ‘symbolic’ meaning to as ‘excessive’ meaning, as they reflected “poetic imagination, or an acceptance of diversity and pluralism”, freeing society to use them at their free will.

This was the result of the audacity of these architects which made Follies to “set an historic precedent, allowing architects of different nationalities to undertake highly individual projects, regardless of the surrounding environment or culture” further suggesting that, beyond symposia and conferences, a “new phase of international exchange” was beginning (TAKI, 1991, p. 82).

The designs of thirteen follies built for Osaka Exhibition were displayed in an AA Exhibition in the following year, with drawings, photographs and models. In her review, Diana Periton acknowledges the non-programmatic concept, the ephemeral context of use, as the reasons why these follies have not even tried to show coherence, apparently following the no context and no meaning themes. The argument evolves to a thought on the absence of meaning and value in (then) present architecture, in apposition at the ephemeral and fragmented things, where authenticity seemed to be easier found (PERITON, 1991). Other reference is due to the Gwangju Follies.

The Gwangju Folly project: a cultural city with thirty-one Follies

Thirty years after Bernard Tschumi first introduction of Follies into the public space, the Gwangju Biennale of contemporary art in South Korea took the concept and redefined it every two years to inspire new Follies purposely built for Gwangju city, by inviting renowned architects, landscapers, and artists. “Folly in its modern terms is an unstructured mechanism that pushes the boundaries of the structuralized urban environment where it is situated (...) an alternative space to communicate with the public”ⁱⁱⁱ. The main aim of the project is to build permanent public architectural installations across the city of Gwangju that respond to the following objectives: promote urban

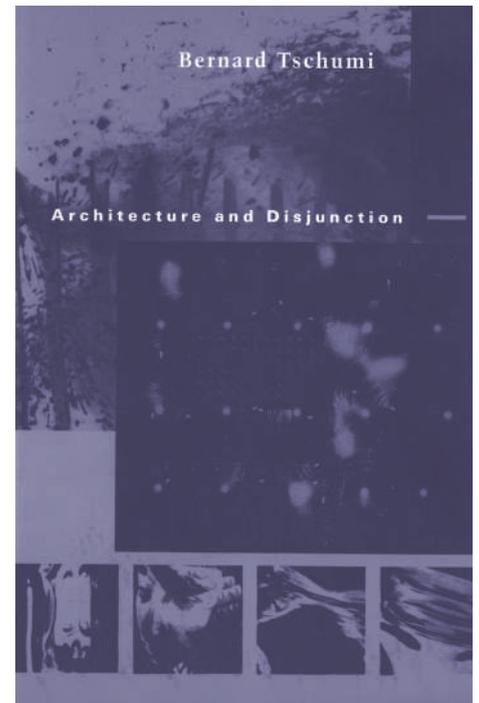
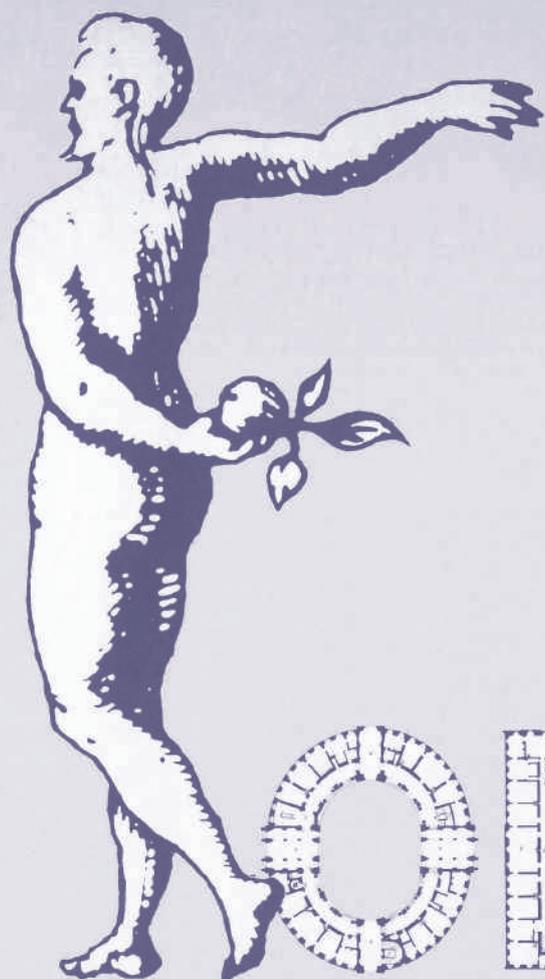


Fig. 7 - Bernard Tschumi's "Architecture and Disjunction" (1996): cover.

regeneration, activate empty areas of the historic city, and enhance the community's sense of place.

The Gwangju Folly project was initiated as part of the 2011 Gwangju Design Biennale, under the co-direction of Seung H-Sang and Ai Weiwei. The theme of Gwangju Folly was “The way that is the way is not always the way”, a reaction to the perception that “designs in the 21st century have shifted the attention from objects to spaces and people^{iv}”. The definition given considered of an urban Folly to be “architecture that can contribute to urban regeneration with the function of a public space being beyond the function entailed in the original definition of a folly” (LEE and LEE, 2016, 157). However, it was now asked to focused on restoring the history. Therefore, several international architects were invited^v to design and build small structures to be explored by users and that called for user's interaction with the surroundings. The site area, in the old city centre, added the complex layer of history, time and heritage values.

Following its second edition in 2013 artistic director Nikolaus Hirsch^{vi} (with curators Philipp Misselwitz and Eui Young Chun) developed a curatorial approach that asked more of invited thinkers than just to design and build,



B.J. Archer

FOLLIES

Architecture for the Late-Twentieth-Century Landscape

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

Fig. 7 - Follies : architecture for the late-twentieth-century landscape: cover.

and use the “Folly as a critical tool of inquiry to address the condition of public space”^{vii}. Beside the material intervention on the city, participants^{viii} were invited to explore human rights and public space, by engaging with a significant political and cultural event: the 1980 Gwangju Democratization Movement^{ix} (suppressed by the South Korean military dictatorship). Hirsch asked:

“Can follies embody something that enhances discussions around the idea of public space. I am less interested in follies as a kind of useless object. I am more interested in an aesthetic experience that is linked to the political dimension of public space”. And continues: “we developed an approach that tries to understand the folly as something that can produce a conscious act of rupture that creates new perspectives and reflections upon the world. So for me, the relation between

uselessness and use has to remain in conflict. It can't be just one or the other. There is a logic of autonomy in the folly, simultaneously a logic of agency”. And therefore the importance of: “The choice of a site and the agenda are not given but part of the architect's or artist's work”^x.

Based on the morphology of the city itself (Fig. 8), the outputs answered the brief of how to preserve these memories (as an alternative to commemorative plaques, signs and memorials that sign historical sites), but most importantly, raised one question: who gets to control space?

In 2016 Gwangju Folly III, conceived by Chun Eui-Young, under the topic “Folly & Everyday Life -Taste and Beauty”, four follies were built^{xi}. These follies, now turning to a participation and engagement idea, offer everyday experiences in

unexpected settings by the use of action verbs to design these follies: to see, to walk, to eat and to play. Under this theme, 30 Folly projects were built around the city for the use of the locals, and for the amusement of visitors, including in specific guided visits.

Finally, in 2016, the Gwangju Folly IV reminds the literal definition of the folly and the Gwangju Folly context: “an uber-decorated object or structure that lost its originally intended function. The locus of our attention is this disjunction between form and performance. Each folly accommodates a certain function within the context of the city, while retaining its potential as an independently operating and read object.

They interact with its surroundings and communicate with the passerby, ultimately rejuvenating the old center of Gwangju”^{xii}.

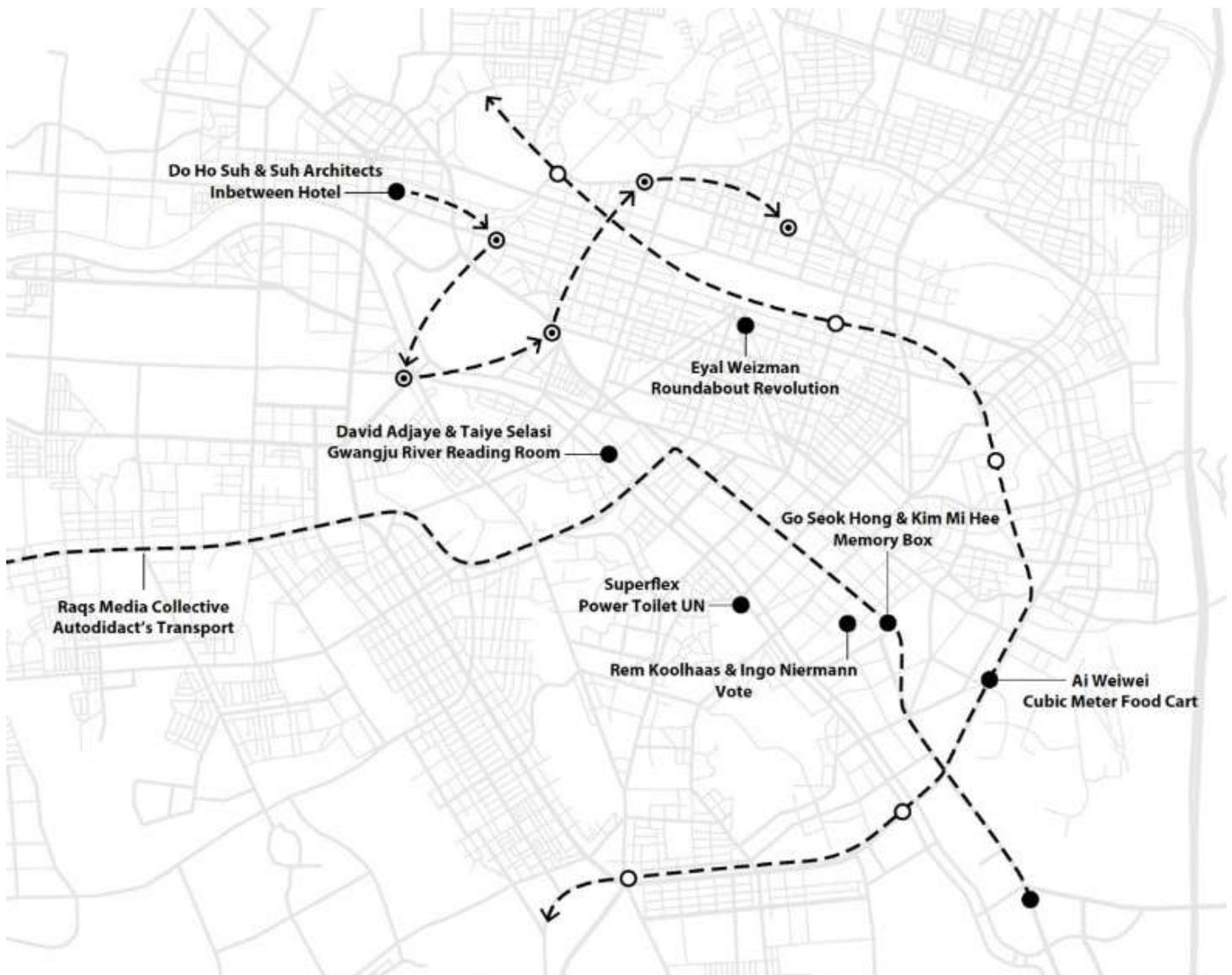


Fig. 8. Gwangju Folly 2013. At https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2013/08/13/nikolaus_hirsch_gwangjufollyproject.html.

Under the theme of “Gwangjuneung”, questions the borders of the old city center, after which diversity expands. Focusing on the tollgate, the entrance, “Gate Folly The light of Moodeung”^{xiii}, completed in May 2020, celebrates the 40th anniversary of the Democratization Movement. In June, infections in the country led to the news that South Korea had entered the second wave of infections.

As in the Roaring Twenties, which followed the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, COVID19 forced us to reflect on our daily lives and reconsider how we reconnect to people in the public realm, and regain the right to have fun and pleasure. Will the post-pandemic lead to a second Roaring '20s or a French “années folles” (“crazy years”)? While nations worldwide are considering how to recover their economies, research on what architecture and cities will look like has been conducted. We believe social and cultural transformations are on the move as a response to the impact of COVID; on the way we used to live, and that urban devices that are attractive and promote encounters may work as a mechanism for positive social change between people, and between people and places.

COVID challenges Sullivan’s maxim: as the purpose is to build may not simply be to respond to a functional need, but rather to be attractive and recover a sense of fun and pleasure that has been taken away for more than a year. How can spaces re-engage people with each other, and with cities? How to attract people to give the spaces meanings and transform previous sad and empty spaces into lively and safe places? Are merely functional spaces needed, or are socio-cultural public places needed more? Will building design need to be rethought with no specific purpose or intention in mind? Will urban and architecture policies attain to these needs?

Within this framework, Follies, the second Issue of the UOU Scientific Journal, aims to redefine the notion of socio-cultural values of the public realm in relation to material and innovative practices from impartial perspectives.

UOU #2 CALL

This issue focuses on work that explores the impacts of COVID19 in peoples’ daily lives, and the role of the architect and the artist in providing meaningful places for socio-cultural relationships in new and imaginative ways. We were particularly interested in research that questioned and provided a comprehensive review on the pedagogical results of the work conducted in the last academic year, crossing disciplines, as well as current state-of-the-art thinking on issues related to the challenges posed by the pandemic to socio-cultural place-making.

Consequently, we received contributions about pedagogical experiences and also contributions that have emerged from other research in and around the topic of Follies - in the disciplines of architecture, art, urbanism and associated areas of study. The topics were organised in this issue according to the call for articles in sections: Meaning, Imagination, Connecting, Constructing and Concepts.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

“Conversation on a Digital Follie / Dialogues between architecture, imagination, and Zoo of Imaginary Beings” is the editorial team’s contribution to this issue, and follows on from the stimulating talk at the on-line launch of issue #2. This Conversation took place in writing at a time when we were back to presentational teaching, and when the urge to contact with people in person and the desire to drop the use of computers to communicate was significant. This UoU Scientific Journal became a Digital Follie in itself, as it was the virtual link among us, people in different countries that have yet to meet in person.

The return of students and teachers to the university campus is revealing the difficulty of loosening up the use of the digital media, although conversations are very much focused on the benefits of such support and on the changes that will soon follow in architecture education, research and practice.

UoU Scientific Journal received submissions from practitioners, emerging

and established scholars, researchers, and architecture students, which illustrates the attention given to the topic selected and the interest in contributing to this topic; these embraced concepts of non-functional buildings, social-cultural places, the public realm, and...follies! Some contributions are focused on pedagogical experiences and others have emerged from research in and around the topic of Follies in the disciplines of architecture, art, urbanism and associated areas of study.

In this issue there is no area of thought that we are afraid to explore, to challenge or to question regarding the interpretations that the *folly*, as an architectural and urban device concept, may entail. Disregarding the fact that we may, or may not, agree with any given claim, what matters more to us as an editorial team is to gather new knowledge and new ways of looking at ourselves, at the places we are living in, and at our world. And this is no folly: this is serious academic work!

The scientific articles included in the sections **Meaning, Imagination, Connecting, Constructing, Concepts**, have been double-blind peer-reviewed by external evaluators, chosen by the Editorial Board from among experts in the relevant fields of study.

The section **Meaning** explores *follies* as historic places of enchantment. Thus, Marcos Belmar Rodríguez calls for the celebration of life through Alexandre Dumas’ (1802-1870) architectural and literary experience in two *Châteaux*, on the outskirts of Paris, eccentric edifices that, together, establish a *folly* built between 1847-49. Belmar finds in the relationship between two *Châteaux*, both pleasure and the duty, social extravagance and the temperance of the words, the frugality of narratives, the pleasure of lived experience and the pleasure of the literary mind. The richness of Dumas’ social life required a similarly “excessive” house - The *Château de Monte Cristo*. He gathered inspiration from his guests - friends, family, and lovers. However, his writing required a quiet working place – the *Château d’If* - from where he could see his whole property.

The relationship between the *bon vivant* and the solitary writer, provides an example that we may use in a pandemic. COVID19 required us to use a single space for family and friends, and the workspace, and eliminated the social connection. Could such a crazy way of building and living could take place now updated to modern-day reality, and rebalancing the time devoted to work and the time devoted to leisure and social interaction? Could Dumas' folly inspire a post COVID19 way of balancing leisure and work, at the users own will?

In the section **Imagination** a contemporary version of *follies* is proposed in relation to the so called "the new 20s" follies of the 21st century. An observer of homes battling with the pandemic in Istanbul, Bihter Almaç explores the imaginative potential of the architect to make spaces differently and use creative responses. She makes an analogy with *Space Rangers* to propose *Rangers* as homes having the capacity to extend physical space and replace program and reason by pleasure and comfort. Represented using architectural drawing and paper surfaces, these types of *follies* are fantastic representations of life stories that transformed the domestic space and its perception. By embracing transformations (like *Space Rangers*) required by the virus, homes became *Rangers* resisting the current typology of home, imaginatively transforming and adapting it all ages of its inhabitants. If this seemed a foolish and utopian vision in the summer of 2019, now the idea of designing transformable homes under attack from the "invisible villain" COVID19 it does not seem so foolish now.

A second article in this section explores the concept of Imagination in the design of strategies and methodologies for implementing follies in cities. Rui Florentino, Virginia Sellari, Susana García Fueyo and Daniel Casas-Valle are professors and students who conducted two pedagogical experiments in different contexts, Portugal and Spain. The study was framed within a definition of *folly* as a "ludic approach" to urban design. Using games, as puzzles and Mikado (where specific problem-solving skills are required to correctly fix pieces and interact with

sticks), they illustrate how these pleasure activities may act as pedagogical tools in the education of architecture students. In addition, this ludic approach contain the idea that *follies* could consubstantiate "urban solutions" for place-making design, in compliance with the European Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By formally designing according to Tschumi's "red dots, lines and surfaces" - a recurring reference in the papers - these academic researchers created urban strategies that aim to contribute to "Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" while enabling the playful use of public space. Demonstrating the usefulness of these strategies, one case proposed a strategy for a number of locations of interventions in a wider territory, while the other one, at a smaller scale, actually reaches a design stage of a *folly*.

The following section addresses the idea of *follies* as **Connecting** devices for today's *Radical Cities*, a concept originally explored for Latin America's informal settlements in the 1960s, under Peter Land's guidance, at the *Proyecto Experimental de Vivienda* (PREVI) - the experimental social housing project in Lima, Peru, that featured James Stirling, Aldo van Eyck, Charles Correa, the Metabolists and Christopher Alexander, among its contributors. Arguing that the housing practices in the informal city - an urban morphology phenomenon of occupation of neglected and residual spaces, voids usually used as wastelands - are the product of urban crisis, Maria Fierro uses an analogy with Italo Calvino's "Invisible Cities" to explore the idea of in-tra-visible spaces and communities. Considering the need to reduce inequalities and to develop sustainable and inclusive cities, she offers a glimpse of a work-in-progress on sustainable urban regeneration. She uses the concept of contemporary follies focused on settlements placed in unused marginal, or "the invisible city in European cities".

This framework locates this event in the field of architectural practice as a design tool to inform architectural projects in responding to the social inequalities in the contemporary city's interstitial

spaces, where "extreme ethnic and social heterogeneity" is found, aiming for their integration. The use of points, lines and surfaces as informal city layers of identity and interdependent systems, is based on Tschumi's strategy: reorganization of urban elements and events firstly applied in La Villette, are used to characterise the complexity of the adaptive systems in place, which are constantly changing. In the Napoli case study, where the interaction between areas of the city and between different communities is clear, the architectural project, as a spatial device, is used to study a specific informal urban configuration - the Gipsy Camp.

The section **Constructing** focuses on building technologies that may bring ideas to life, particularly in the case of ephemeral structures. Ana Neiva, Marta Viana and João Nuno Gomes describe a pedagogical experience developed for the Porto Design Bienalle 2021 (during the pandemic year), involving architecture and interior design students. Six site-specific devices were developed in an "experimental laboratory" using construction ideas with "do-it-yourself building techniques", available materials and within building restrictions. The *petite follies* aimed at providing, or provoking, different experiences / new relationships among people and between people and the public spaces. As a guide for the collective design stage, four major themes were set out that aimed at promoting interaction between the inhabitants and the walking / pedestrian visitors to the city, along the Douro River. The methodology applied by each professor with each group of students is carefully described, the challenges faced during the construction, and the strategies established to overcome problems explains the pedagogical approach taken. The disappointment of not been able to celebrate all the six works is mentioned as well as the need to have public participation. Comments registered during the construction questioned the functional purpose, which is in line with the whole idea of *folly*. Reflecting on an experience of building 1:1 scale model, it is "good to know" that "useful and attractive" places have been set in place for the enjoyment of users / visitors of these ephemeral

architecture structures, properly named *petites follies*.

The final section on Follies explored them as a **Concept**, with a paper on the cultural and political meanings of *follies*. In his paper title "*La Cage aux Folies*" / *The Return of the Cage*, Pedro Sol explores a linguistic link between the title of a comedy movie, *La Cage aux folles* (Director Édouard Molinaro, 1979), with the Portuguese flexible structure *gaiola Pombalina*, or *Pombalina* cage, a construction system applied in the reconstruction of Lisbon buildings after the devastating 1755 earthquake. In the title of the film, the expression refers to the foolishness that take place inside a drag queens' nightclub, considering *La Cage* as an enclosed space where something, or someone, is not just locked up but has some fun.

This is linked with the meaning of the 18th century wooden structures used to prevent the ruin of masonry buildings, and what it can have today. Exploring the idea of *embodied labour* to highlight the value of these historical structures, Sol argues that the value of traditional buildings is not generally recognised, as current interventions preserve the façades but demolish the interiors of buildings and destroy the cages. Sol argues that the *Pombalina* cage may support the dissemination of an alternative conservation strategy if used in a moveable and visible way, to commemorate two soon to come national events.

Proposing to build a replica of the structure, a new meaning for the *Pombalina* cage is given, for these *follies* will be moveable and can be placed in specific locations in urban space. Doing this could contribute to enhancing the value of 18th century buildings as a whole, not separating the value of the façades from the value of the interior of these historic buildings. Building and displaying moveable cages also values the interdisciplinarity with non-architects as along with architecture students, would be carpenters and non-specialists in construction. This cooperative approach predicts that critical thinking regarding heritage preservation can be developed.

Although the uselessness of these *follies* may be questioned when placed in urban space, it will help to raise awareness of the inherent value that the historical *Pombalina* cage has for Lisbon.

Finally, in the **Agencies** section, Victor Mestre proposes a drawn and writing approach to the concept of *follies* and their development in the Portuguese context, using the example of the *casinhas de prazer*, (in English "small pleasure houses"), on the Island of Madeira and on mainland palaces and manor houses.

The **Atlas** section presents students selected works from workshop, studios, and other academic contexts. The contexts in which these proposals have been produced are diverse. However, a common perception of folly may be recognised: to stop for a moment, to stay to meet, to establish relationships with others and / or with the built space itself, from where specific perceptions may be felt and / or observed.

A folly becomes a place for social experiences, for sensorial practices where interaction triggers the senses, creates memories, and induces a feel-good factor and well-being.

Following the impact of COVID19, people engage with places differently, and the relationships between space and place can produce knowledge that can be learned from a range of individual and collective experiences. In this pandemic period, we are living through, people urgently need to experience pleasurable places, and these architecture students' proposals display their responsibility in providing qualitative spaces that can become meaningful, spaces that can then be transformed into places (Tuan, 2011, p. 136).

The section **Overseas**, includes contributions from Turkey, Cyprus and the UK.

Ozan Avci's contribution is an on-going work begun in 2015 at MEF University (Turkey), that might have seemed unlikely. Would it be possible to provide a learning experience where architecture students would not only design for community's needs, but also

design adaptable wooden structures in cooperation with communities, NGO's and local governments? This idea of learning by doing has a holistic aim: not only to use the critical and relational thinking required in architecture design, but also to build with the available resources, aiming at delivering a social and spatial impact. The student's *folly* is framed according to Goethe's concept of "pregnant point", i.e., small-scale units that deliver forms where different activities can take place. Furthermore, the two cases chosen to illustrate the main idea clarify the relevance of the historic context in design and building, in the learning experience, and in the social outcome for the local community and its users.

The workshop organised in July 2019 by the Cyprus Architects Association, aimed to be the first presentation of a series of annual summer events of creative and communitarian hands-on training meetings. Yiorgos Hadjichristou, Markella Menikou and Angela Kyriacou Petrou, from the University of Nicosia, established a complete and immersive programme of action to take place in a former colonial village now occupied by international holidays houses, which provided a suitable site to gather a group of international students and teachers. An "invisible layer of complexity" was slowly unveiled by the group of international students during two weeks experience of what began as a mere "construction" workshop.

A specialist in traditional Japanese wooden joinery, Saimon Toshifumi from Kyoto Seika University, added the cultural, social, educational and technical expertise needed to think and build timber follies for a specific site, redefining local traditions, history and identity. The authors describe engaging the participation of the local community, authorities and carpenters, a pedagogical experience that also involved the presentation and discussion of ideas to an audience of non-experts. However, the "most hard" pedagogical experience would have been the construction of the timber structures offering a tactile, sensory experience of site and material, involving all the senses in thinking and making temporary devices, which were also used as performative places.

Doina Carter shares with our ambition to engage students in real-life architectural projects, a practice to gain professional knowledge in an educational environment. A Design Project for 3rd year students at Lincoln University, the challenge was to balance real-life clients wishes and academic requirements. An inspirational site located in a public park of a former spa village, whose history is linked to spring water for healing and recreation purposes, the local charity - the stakeholders – were interested in ideas from “the next generation of creative minds” to address identified problems.

This provided an opportunity: to construct a brief, “to question the question”, to firstly consider the macro scale by analysing the broader context. Only then, specific proposals should be developed. The survey visit took in details of landscape, occupation and circulation of what is an expansive park.

The sensorial context was intense, the circulation paths diverse, and with some “in-between” spaces. Existing points of entry were not inviting people in. Each student took their own research and therefore, followed their own ideas. Using, for example, Jan Gehl methods of place-making, or Pallasmaa’s phenomenological approach, the thirteen outputs comprise in a nutshell, in a nutshell, proposals for accessibility, inclusiveness, diversity, community use, pleasure, i.e., a pause for enjoyment of the park.

These enjoyable pauses materialised in architectural proposals that could be catalysts for a sustainable future of this heritage place values.

Follies as (a Place for) Continuous Experimentation

In completing this issue #2 of the UoU Scientific Journal, several thoughts arise regarding an overall definition of *Folly* which, after all, was one of the aims of this work.

It can be argued that *Folly* is a dynamic concept which may be materialised in several different ways yet sharing the main purpose of providing communities with enjoyable and well-designed structures in urban space or the

Trends of folly

View usage for:

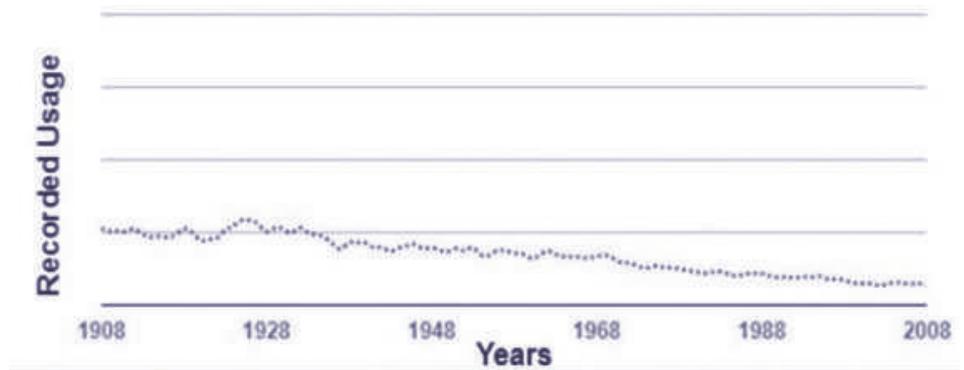


Fig. 9 – “Folly: trend of usage for the last 100 years”. Collins Dictionary Online: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/pt/dictionary/english/folly>.

landscape, therefore making what Tuan rightly names as *places*.

The perspective of experience and the urgency to ascribe meaning to our common activities and our social experiments, have gained in the past couple of years an importance never felt before.

We believe that this urgency will change significantly urban spaces in the next decade, with holistic approaches to outdoor areas for the sake of secure leisure meetings, that will bring about major visible changes to our esplanades or pedestrians’ sidewalks.

Mental recovery and well-being is needed after such a time of restricted social interactions, a situation that Dumas would have handled with difficulty after his experience in the *Chateau de Monte Cristo*.

According to the Collins Dictionary Online (Fig.9), the use of the word has declined in the last 100 years, with a slight increase in the early 1920’s.

After finalising this issue of the UoU Scientific Journal, we believe that this word will henceforth become used more and more. Furthermore, a scientific inquiry of the content compiled in this number, enables us to draw some tentative conclusions, however cautiously from this issue #2 on *The return of the Follies*:

- To do this Journal, in this pandemic period, was an act of sheer folly of the editorial team; still, the result achieved our aim to gather really interesting people – academics and practitioners, architects and artists, and international students - and interesting approaches to the topic;
- The production of scientific papers after a hard lock-down, during a less stressed summer, was a challenge; however, it would be utter folly to take the risk of not publishing at a time when the need for international knowledge and experiences has never been greater;
- Those who collaborated are solely responsible for the fact that this issue is a treasure trove of creativity, initiative, dedication, resilience, adaptability and human folly;
- After lockdowns, isolations and quarantines, places of joy are needed in public space;

We believe that, when COVID19 virus is controlled, sheer human folly will surge from all, as in the roaring twenties of the past century, and a lively and humanist environment will return in which our educational core values, adapted and renewed, will provide twenty-first century places for the enjoyment of freedom and happiness of living on this planet: *follies*.

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NOTES

ⁱ Since this editorial started (24 oct 2021: Total Cases in the world of 243,506,948 with 4,946,609 Deaths) until it ended (24 nov. 2021: Total Cases in the world of 259,258,632 with 5,172,311 Deaths), tracked by The Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University, USA (on-line).

ⁱⁱ The Exhibition included 13 follies by twelve architects and practices selected by Arata Isozaki (Expo's General Commissioner) and Alvin Boyarsky Chairman of the Architectural Association): Chris MacDonald and Peter Salter, Architekturburo Bolles-Wilson, Zaha Hadid, Suzuki Ryoji, Peter Cook and Christine Hawley, Coop Himmelbl(l) au, José Antonio Martínez Lapeña and Elías Torres, Morphosis, Daniel Libeskind, Andrea Branzi, Eleni Gigantes and Elia Zenghelis, and Yatsuka Hajime.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://gwangjubiennale.org/en/Board/9606/detailView.do>

^{iv} <https://gdb.or.kr/archive/4th>

^v Architects Florian Beigel, Peter Eisenman, Juan Herreros, Sungryong Joh, S. H. Jung and S J Kim, Dominique Perrault, Francisco Sanin, Nader Tehrani, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, and Alejandro Zaera-Polo.

^{vi} *Gwangju Folly II*. 2013. Ed. Nikolaus Hirsch, Eui Young Chun, Philipp Misselwitz. Hatje Cantz. ISBN 978-3-7757-3553-7.

^{vii} <https://gwangjubiennale.org/en/Board/7714/detailView.do>

^{viii} For *Gwangju Folly II*, Nikolaus Hirsch (director), Philipp Misselwitz and Eui Young Chun (curators) *Gwangju Folly II* invited practitioners in architecture, art

and literature. The eight follies are: David Adjaye & Taiye Selasi: *Gwangju River Reading Room*, Ai Weiwei: *Cubic Meter Food Cart*, Seok-hong Go & Mihee Kim: *Memory Box*, Rem Koolhaas & Ingo Niermann: *Vote*, Raqs Media Collective: *Autodidact's Transport*, Do Ho Suh & Suh Architects: *In-between Hotel*, Superflex: *Power Toilets / UNESCO*, Eyal Weizman with Samaneh Moafi: *Roundabout Revolution*.

^{ix} In 2011, the Gwangju Uprising received global recognition through UNESCO, which included the movement into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

^x https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2013/08/13/nikolaus_hirsch_gwangjufollyproject.html

^{xi} The Follies are: *View Folly*, by Moon Hoon and media artists Jan & Tim Edler; *Gwangju Dutch (GD) Folly*, by Winy Maas (MVRDV) and Cho ByoungSoo; *Cook Folly*, by Jang Jinwoo, FUN (Fun Urban Networking) and PUN (Positive Urban Networking) *Folly*, by Kim Chanjoong and artist Jin Siyon; and *Mini Folly*, by Kook Hyoung-Gul, media artist Syn Sue Gyeong and Leif Høgføldt Hansen along with 12 architecture major students.

^{xii} https://gwangjufolly.org/bbs/content_en.php?co_id=en_folly4

^{xiii} *Folly by the Korean Artist Leenam Lee and the Architect Min-Kuk Kim*.